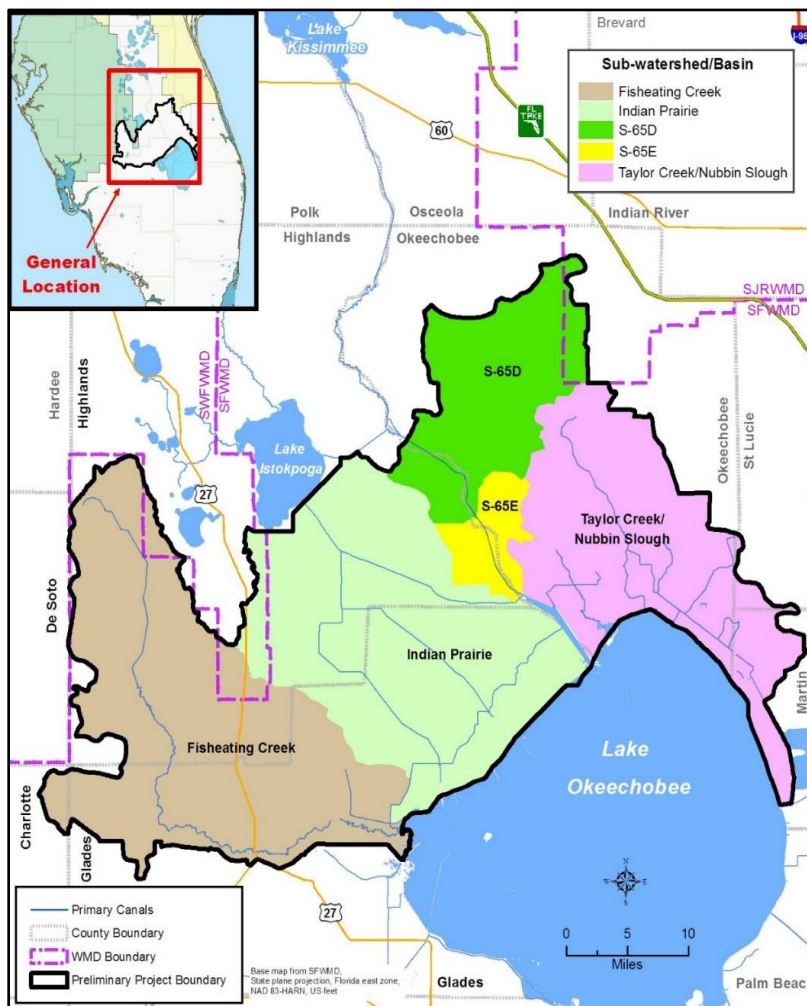


July 2016

## just the FACTs

This fact sheet is provided as a reference to encourage a greater understanding of the various issues related to managing water in South Florida.

### Lake Okeechobee Watershed Planning



Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project Preliminary Project Area

### Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project

- The Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project is a planning effort that aims to identify opportunities to improve the quality, quantity, timing and distribution of water entering Lake Okeechobee.
- One of the goals of the project is to identify potential storage and water quality opportunities north of the lake.
- The project will provide for better management of lake water levels
- The project will also reduce high-volume discharges to the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie estuaries downstream of the lake.
- The project will improve system wide operational flexibility.
- The project's preliminary project area, where placement of features will be considered, covers a large portion of the Lake Okeechobee Watershed north of the lake.

(More)



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**Why storage is needed north of Lake Okeechobee**

- Regional water storage around Lake Okeechobee is a crucial piece of overall Everglades restoration and water management in South Florida.
- Storage projects are already operational, under construction or planned east of the lake (IRL-S C-44 Reservoir/STA), west of the lake (C-43 West Basin Storage Reservoir) and south of (A-1 Flow Equalization Basin; L-8 Flow Equalization Basin, Central Everglades Planning Project) of Lake Okeechobee.
- Storage north of the lake is an essential missing piece and the next logical step in the regional storage puzzle.
- A University of Florida Water Institute's 2015 study recommends creating hundreds of thousands of acre-feet of water storage north of Lake Okeechobee.
- Northern storage reduces the need for damaging freshwater releases to the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie estuaries.
- During the dry season, water stored north of the lake can be routed through the lake into the Caloosahatchee River and Estuary when needed to protect the health of the river and estuary.
- Water stored north of the lake provides the greatest flexibility for delivering water when and where it is needed for water supply. Lake Okeechobee is the primary backup drinking water source for 6 million South Florida residents.
- Storage north of the lake provides ecological benefits to the 730-square-mile lake by providing an additional water source during dry times.
- Northern storage maximizes operational flexibility and reduces the potential impacts of sending more water south than the 200,000 acre-feet identified in previous planning efforts.
- This storage will also help reduce the amount of harmful nutrients (phosphorus and nitrogen) entering the lake. This supports Florida's publicly developed Basin Management Action Plan aimed to improve water quality in the lake.
- The SFWMD already owns thousands of acres of land north of the lake, which is available for storage.
- Water stored south of the lake can only be sent south through a system that is limited by design capacity, ecosystem concerns and enforcement of the U.S. Endangered Species Act.
- Storing water south of Lake Okeechobee does not provide the same flexibility in managing the system or ecological or water quality benefits to both the lake and areas east, west and south as northern storage.